



## **Hank Freid of the Impulsive Group takes luxury from Times Square to the high seas**

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If there is one thing that hotel developer Hank Freid understands well, it is the essence of hospitality and luxury. For over 30 years, the CEO/founder of the Impulsive Group has been a successful developer of luxury hotel properties in New York City as well as owner and operator of charter yachts in the Mediterranean and Caribbean.

Freid's current project in New York is the renovation and revamping of a Times Square hotel he recently purchased. What was a two-star property known as the Portland Square Hotel will be transformed into a sophisticated four and a half-star boutique hotel which is slated to open in fall of 2009. Aptly named the Sanctuary, Freid has designed the new hotel to be a tranquil and elegant oasis in the beating heart of Manhattan. The Sanctuary is poised to be a destination for guests who seek to indulge in an extravagant stay in one of the world's most exciting cities.

The Sanctuary will have 120 spectacular rooms and an exclusive duplex penthouse suite with roof access and views of Times Square. The in-room bath surrounded by adjustable drapery allows for an instant luxurious setting, or private bath, all at the guests' discretion. All rooms will also feature Frette linens, towel warmers, flat screen TVs, rain showerheads and iPod docking stations.

"The Sanctuary will cater to sophisticated tourists, publishing and corporate executives, modeling agencies and movie studios," Freid said, adding that the trendy rooftop bar he is building will likewise be a destination for both New Yorkers and tourists alike.

Freid continuously looks for new ways to offer luxury to those who seek it. For \$100,000 per week, he offers several yachts for charter during the Mediterranean high season and in the Caribbean during the winter months. Most recently, his 120-foot yacht, called the

"Impulsive," underwent a multi-million dollar refit and the renovations have made the ship even more luxurious than before. The yacht now reaches an unusually high top speed of 32 knots and the newly installed Sea Tel system offers wireless internet access at sea and satellite TV from all over the world.

While there are only a handful of the new Furuno NavNet 3D radars available, the Impulsive boasts the first of these onboard navigation systems in Europe. The renovations have also brought a multi-zone audio system throughout the boat including wiring for a DJ to plug into three locations. Karaoke machines, laser lights and smoke machines complete the party atmosphere. Brand-new three-person Sea-Doo jet skis, which recirculate water and are consequently the first environmentally friendly jet skis available, are also on board. Interior designer Karen Lynn caps off the fabulous refit by moving the dining room into the salon and creating a VIP state room. Freid plans to create packages that integrate his hotels and yachts and incorporate helicopters and private jets to take his guests between them.

Lifestyle hotels, chicly designed, typically come with a costly price tag. However, Freid believes that

anyone should be able to have a fashionable hotel experience, not only those that can afford to stay at luxurious four or five star hotels. "Upscale amenities and services within a fashionable, contemporary setting should also be attainable within a sensible price range," he said. "Young travelers on modest budgets - typically relegated to characterless, utilitarian accommodations in New York City - also should be able to have a boutique hotel experience."

This is the vision behind his two Upper West Side hotels, both of which recently underwent major renovations. The 125-room Marrakech Hotel NYC, on Upper Broadway, is not only chic and fashionable, but with a starting price of \$179 per night, it is also affordable. Rooms in the Moroccan themed hotel now boast upscale amenities such as flat screen TVs and European, high thread count linens, all within exposed brick rooms. Since opening, the Marrakech has been very well received with occupancy of 100% on most weekends.

Freid's second Upper West Side property offering guests a "boutique hostel" stay is the Broadway Hotel & Hostel (Freid's first hotel acquisition in 1976), located just a few blocks away from the Marrakech. The average price for one bed costs a mere \$18-35 per night but with amenities such as a 2,500 s/f recreational common area that includes a surround-sound theater room, guests will be surprised by the value. "I think we've succeeded in raising the bar and transforming the budget hotel landscape in the city," he notes.

Freid's son, 29 year old Brandon Freid, joined the Impulsive Group in 2003 and has since risen to the position of vice president of acquisitions. Brandon has been integral to the company's overall growth and recent procurements, such as the Sanctuary. Today, the Impulsive Group's portfolio also includes the 220-room four-star Ameritania Hotel at 54th and Broadway (next to the Ed Sullivan Theatre, home of the David Letterman Show) which is undergoing an expansion to include 100 more rooms. Father and son are currently looking to expand their luxury holdings in New York and Florida and are also exploring acquisition opportunities in San Francisco, Boston, Tahiti and the Dominican Republic. They are currently in negotiations on two properties in Manhattan and a hotel with a spa is under construction in South Beach.